DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 343 924 TM 018 068

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TITLE Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and American College Test (ACT): Nevada Score Results--1988.
INSTITUTION Nevada State Dept. of Education, Carson City. Planning, Research and Evaluation Branch.
PUB DATE Nov 88
NOTE 20p.
PUB TYPE Statistical Data (110) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Achievement Tests; *College Entrance Examinations; Comparative Testing; *Educational Trends; Ethnic Groups; Graphs; Higher Education; High Schools; *High School Students; National Norms; *Scores; Standardized Tests; State Programs; Tables (Data); Testing Programs; *Test Results; Trend Analysis
IDENTIFIERS American College Testing Program; *Nevada; Scholastic Aptitude Test; Test of Standard Written English

ABSTRACT

The two primary college admission test batteries given in Nevada are the American College Test (ACT) and the tests prepared by the College Board, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the Test of Standard Written English (TSWE). This report provides an overview of the tests and major trends in Nevada for 1988. These tests apply to a small portion of the high school population, and comparisons from year-to-year and state-to-state should be made with caution. In 1988, as in the past, Nevada students scored higher than students nationwide on the College Board examinations. Nevada students' scores increased from the preceding year. On the ACT, Nevada student scores declined slightly, although they remained above the national average. Compared to the previous year, more students took both tests in 1988. Of the total 6,495 examinations administered in the 1987-88 school year, approximately 62% were ACT and 38% were SAT. Five graphs and four tables illustrate trends for 1982 through 1988. (SLD)

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SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST (SAT) AND AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST (ACT)

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Nevada Score Results - 1988

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AND
AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST (ACT)

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NOVEMBER 1988

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I. INTRODUCTION

The two primary college admission test batteries given in Nevada are the American College Test **(ACT)**, which has four curricular subsections, and the College Board of Admissions Testing program **(ATP)**, which includes the Test of Standard Written English **(TSWE)** and the Scholastic Aptitude Test **(SAT)**.

The publishers of both of these test batteries produce annual summary reports including state and national scores. These reports are made available during September. The NDE does not receive information about other individual states. This report is intended to provide the reader with an overview of the two tests and major trends pertinent to Nevada.

The Department maintains more extensive demographic data about the Nevada and national examinee pool. People interested in such technical information should contact the Planning, Research and Evaluation Branch.

It should be stressed that the students involved generally plan on attending college. **Because these tests apply only to a small portion of the high school student population, comparisons from year-to-year and state-to-state should be made with caution.**

2. ABOUT THE SAT

The Admissions Testing Program of the College Board includes four major components:

The Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) -- The **SAT** is a 2 1/2 hour, multiple-choice test that measures developed verbal and mathematical reasoning abilities related to successful performance in college. **SAT** scores are intended to supplement the secondary school record and other information about the student in assessing readiness for college-level work. Student performance on the **SAT** is reported on a scale of 200 to 800, with a standard error of measurement of approximately 30 to 40 points. The verbal portion of the **SAT** also yields subscores in reading comprehension and vocabularly, which are reported on on scale of 20 to 30, with a standard error to measurement of approximately 4 points.

The Test of Standard Written English (TSWE) -- This is a 30-minute, multiple-choice test administered with the **SAT**. The **TSWE** evaluates students' ability to recognize standard written English. **TSWE** scores are intended to help place students in appropriate freshman English courses. The scores are reported on a scale of 20 to 80; however, scores above 60 are reported as 60 + because the test is not designed to make distinctions above that level. The standard error of measurement on the **TSWE** is approximately 3.5 points.

The Achievement Tests -- Designed to measure knowledge in specific subject areas and the ability to apply that knowledge, the Achievement Tests are independent of particular textbooks or methods of instruction. Although the types of questions change little from year to year, the tests do evolve to reflect general trends in high school curriculums.

Achievement Tests are given in English Composition, Literature, American History and Social Studies, European History and World Cultures, Mathematics Level I, Mathematics Level II, French, German, Hebrew, Latin, Spanish, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. All are one-hour multiple-choice tests, with the exception of a version of the English Composition Test that contains an essay assignment in addition to multiple-choice questions. Scores of all the Achievement Tests are reported on a scale of 200 to 800, with a standard error of measurement of approximately 30 points.

The Student Descriptive Questionnaire (SDQ) -- The **SDQ** contains questions about the students background, academic record, extracurricular activities, and plans for college study. The **SDQ** is designed to enable individual students to present to colleges a broader picture of themselves than in conveyed by test scores alone. Students voluntarily respond to the **SDQ** as part of the registration process for the **SAT** or Achievement Tests. The **SDQ** information included in this report is useful in monitoring trends and understanding the background of the college-bound students who take the **SAT**.

NEVADA SAT RESULTS

This year, as in the past, Nevada students scored higher than students nationwide on the College Board Examinations. Nevada student scores have shown an increase from last year, at a time when the national scores remained the same or declined slightly. See Figures 1 and 2, and Table 1.

Figure 1

SAT

Test Results from 1982 to 1988

VERBAL

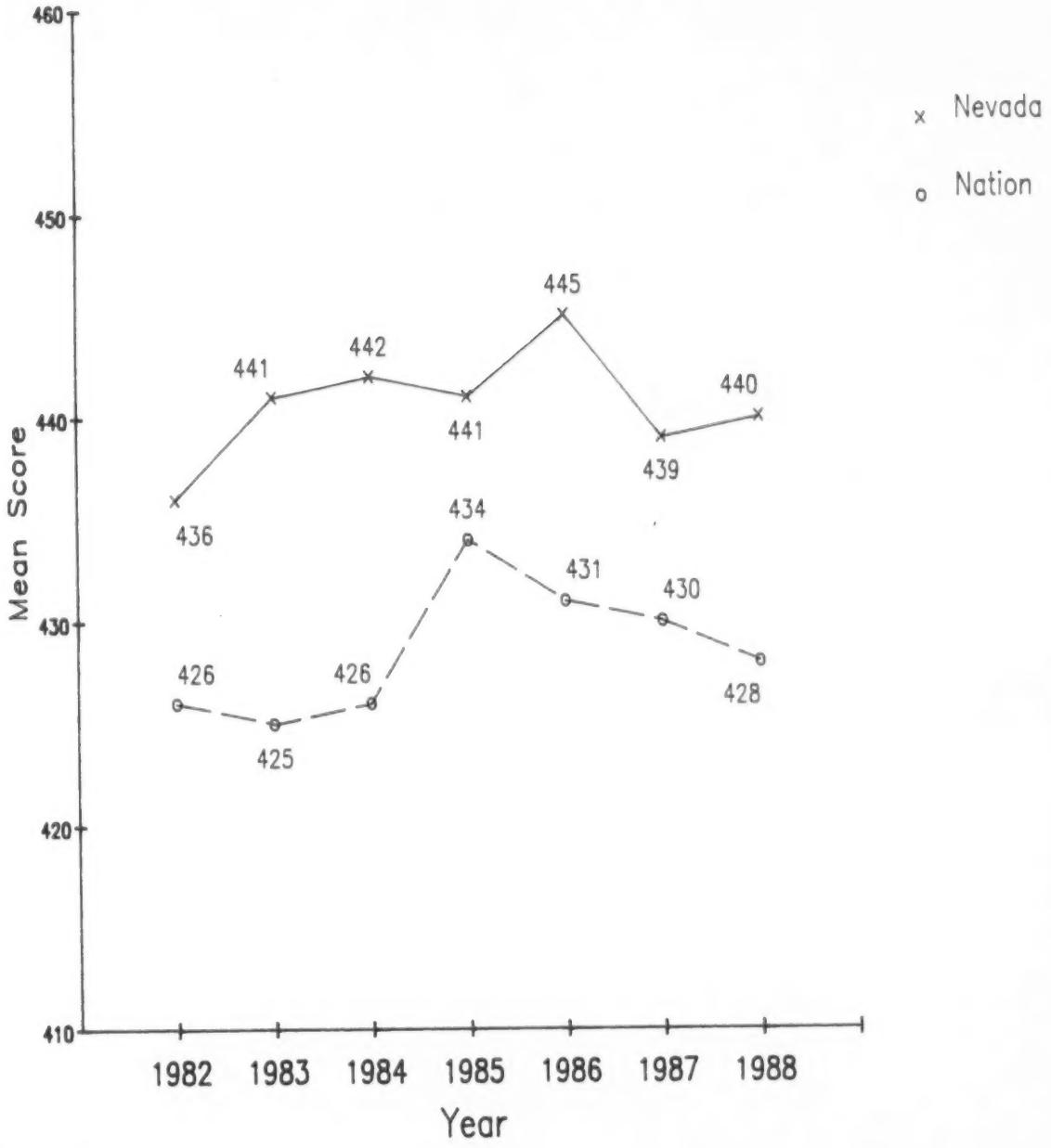
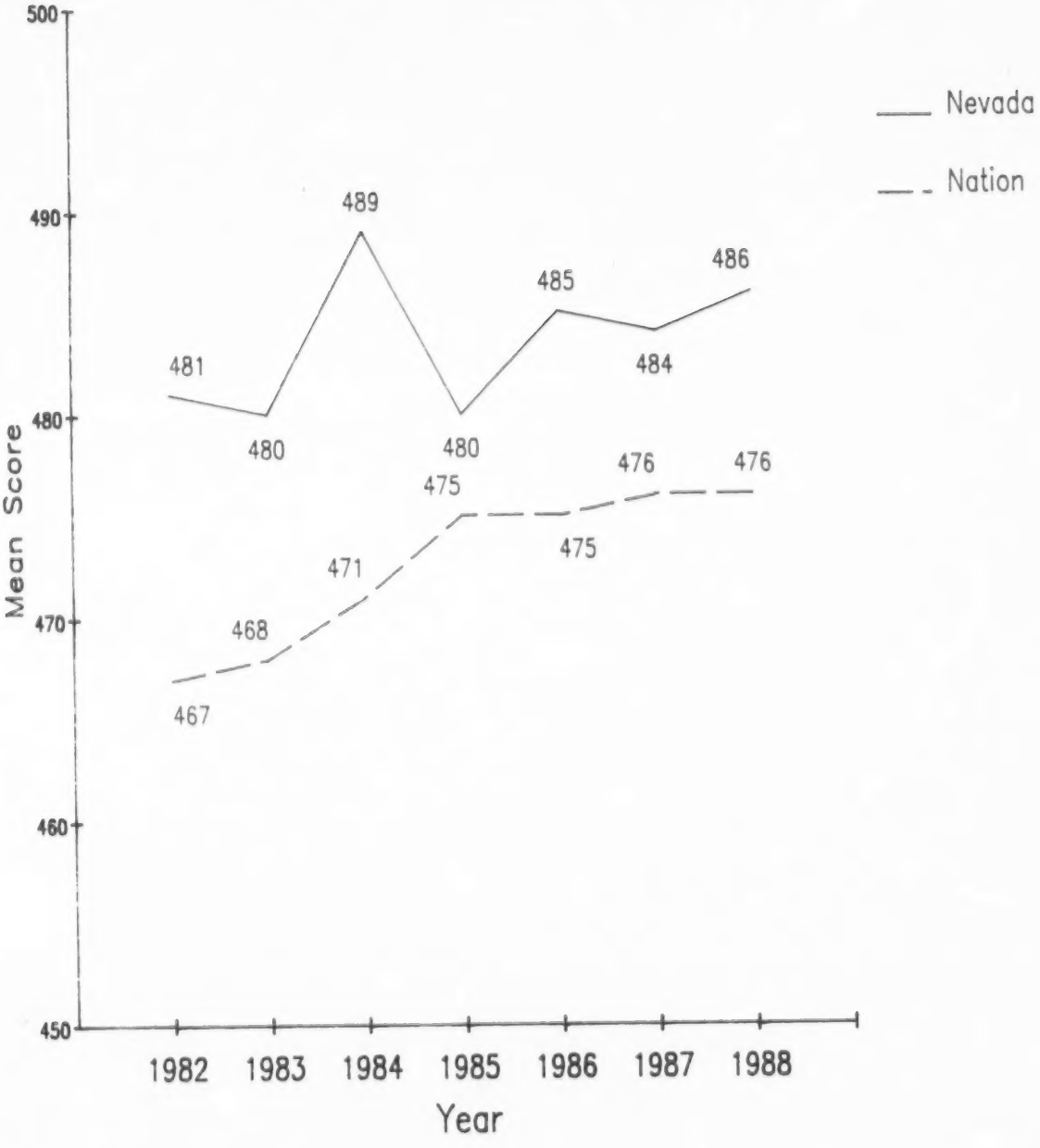


Figure 2

SAT

Test Results from 1982 to 1988

MATHEMATICS



3. ABOUT THE ACT

In order to fully understand your High School Profile Report, you will need some information about the **ACT** Assessment Program, which is the source of all the data in the report.

The **ACT** Assessment Program consists of the Student Profile Section and the **ACT** Interest Inventory, which students complete when they register for the Assessment, and four timed tests of educational development taken at a test center under standardized conditions. The tests of educational development--English Usage, Mathematics Usage, Social Studies Reading, and Natural Sciences Reading--emphasize problem-solving and reasoning abilities rather than the rote recall of facts. The Student Profile section collects biographical data and information about the student's postsecondary plans, special academic and out-of-class achievements, aspirations, and high school course work. The Interest Inventory measures six interest dimensions: Science, Arts, Social Service, Business Operations, Business Detail, and Technical. Data in the High School Profile Report are obtained from the students' test results and from their responses to selected items in the Student Profile Section.

TEST CONTENT AND FORMAT

The English Usage Test (75 items, 40 minutes). This test measures the student's understanding of the conventions of standard written English in punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, diction and style, and logic and organization. The test does not measure the rote recall of rule of grammar, but stresses the analysis of the kind of effective expository writing that several prose passages with certain portions underlined and numbered. For each underlined portion, four alternative responses, including "NO CHANGE," are given. The student must decide which alternative is most appropriate in the context of the passage.

The Mathematics Usage Test (40 items, 50 minutes). This test measures the student's mathematical reasoning ability. It emphasis the solution of practical quantitative problems that are encountered in many postsecondary curricula and includes a sampling of mathematical techniques covered in high school courses. The test emphasizes quantitative reasoning rather than memorization of formulas, knowledge of techniques, or computational skill. Each item in the test poses a question with five alternative answers, the last of which may be "None of the above."

The Social Studies Reading Test (52 items, 35 minutes). This test measures the comprehension, analytical and evaluative reasoning, and problem-solving skills required in the social studies. There are two types of items: the first is based on reading passages, and the second on general background or information obtained primarily in high school social studies courses. All items are multiple choice with four alternatives. The items based on the reading passage required not only reading comprehension skills, but the ability to draw inferences and conclusions, to examine the interrelationships and import of ideas in a passage, to extend the ideas expressed in the passage to new situations, to make deductions from experimental or graphic data, and to recognize a writer's bias, style, and mode reasoning. The discrete information items ask the students to apply what they have learned in high school social studies courses to familiar, new, or analogous problems.

The Natural Sciences Reading Test (52 items, 35 minutes). This best measures the interpretation, analysis, evaluation, critical reasoning, and problem-solving skills required in the natural sciences. There are two types of items: the first is based on reading passages, the second on information about science. All items are multiple choice problems. Descriptions of scientific experiments and discussions of current scientific and distinguish among the purposes of experiments and discussions of current scientific theories are the most common formats. The items require the students to understand and distinguish among the purposes of experiments, to examine the logical relationships between experimental hypotheses and the generalizations that can be drawn from situations, to propose alternate ways to conduct experiments, and to judge the practical value of the ideas and theories presented in a passage. The discrete information items ask the students to apply what they have learned in high school science courses to familiar, new, or anlogous problems. Although these items require the understanding of significant facts, they require only minimal algebraic and arithmetic computations.

The Composite Score on the **ACT** Assessment is the arithmetic average of the scores earned in English, mathematics, social studies, and natural sciences.

NEVADA ACT RESULTS

As seen in Figure 3, Nevada students composite scores declined slightly remained stable since 1987. At the same time, the national average score increased slightly.

Table 2 and 3 illustrate the numbers and relative performance of different groups on the ACT.

Figure 3

ACT

Test Results from 1982 to 1988

COMPOSITE

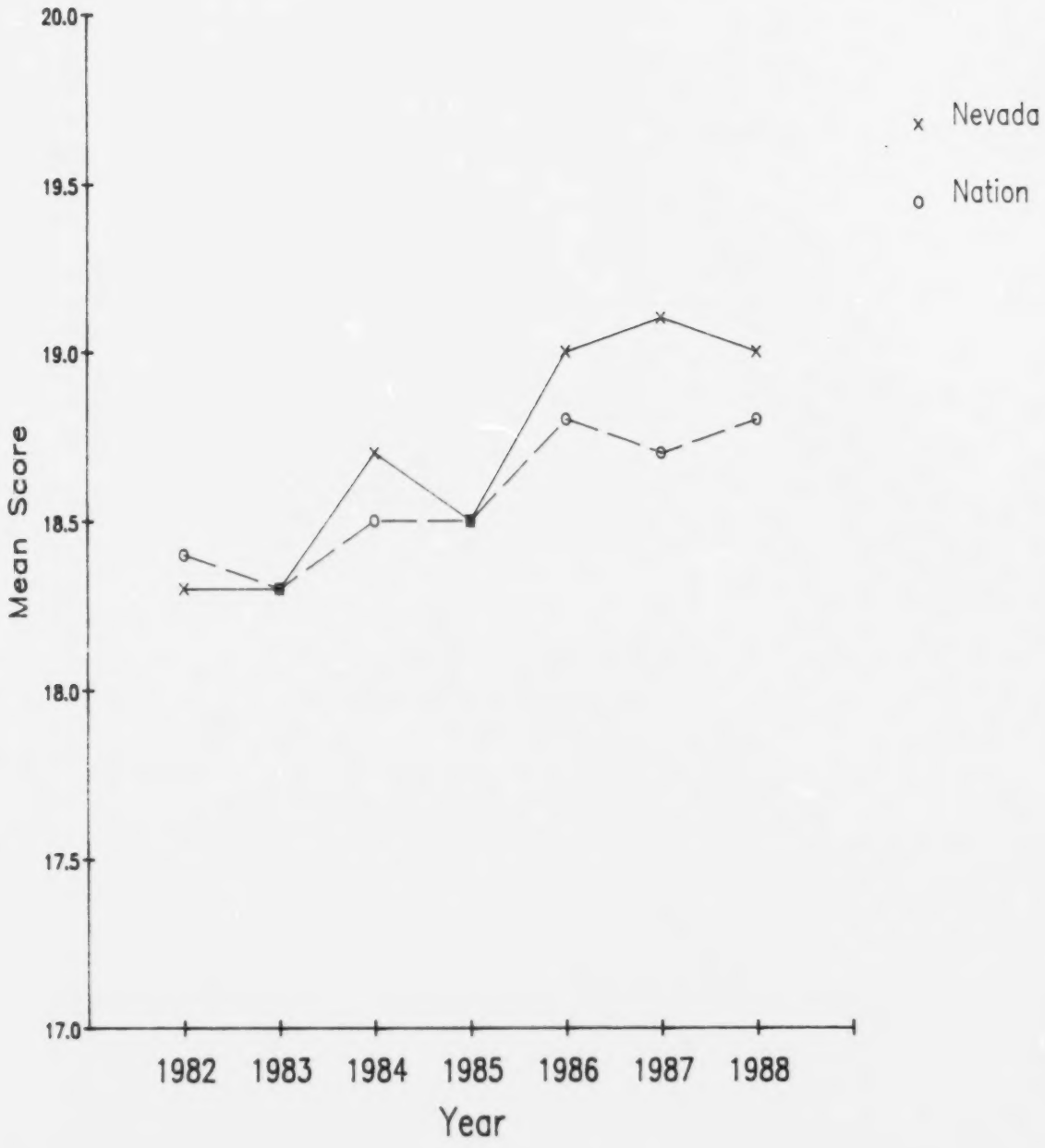


TABLE 2

AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST (ACT) SCORE AVERAGES FOR NEVADA STUDENTS 1982-1988

Year	Number Tested	Eng.	Math	Social Sciences	Natural Sciences	Nevada Composite	National Composite
1982	4241	17.8	16.9	17.5	20.6	18.3	18.4
1983	4644	17.9	16.9	17.3	20.8	18.3	18.3
1984	4235	18.3	17.6	17.8	20.9	18.7	18.5
1985	3931	18.1	17.0	17.5	21.0	18.5	18.5
1986	3561	18.9	17.4	18.2	21.2	19.0	18.8
1987	3677	18.8	17.7	17.9	21.5	19.1	18.7
1988	4033	18.6	17.3	17.9	21.5	19.0	18.8

ACT SCORE AVERAGE FOR NATIONAL SAMPLE 87-88

Year	English	Math	Social Sciences	Natural Sciences
1987	18.4	17.2	17.5	21.4
1988	18.5	17.2	17.4	21.4

TABLE 3

ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS OF ACT TESTED NEVADA STUDENTS

ETHNIC BACKGROUND	1983 %	1984 %	1985 %	1986 %	1987 %	1988 %	CHANGE 87-88 %
Afro American/Blacks	5	5	5	4	4	5	-1
American Indian	2	2	2	1	1	2	+1
Caucasian/White	81	82	81	82	82	79	-3
Mexican/Spanish American	2	3	3	2	3	3	0
Oriental American	4	4	4	3	5	5	0
Puerto Rican	1	1	2	1	1	2	+1
Other/No Response	4	3	3	3	4	4	0

ACT reports the number of Nevada students tested, and these data, together with department records, were used to calculate the percents presented.

TABLE 4

ACT COMPOSITE SCORE AVERAGES FOR DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS (1988)

ETHNIC GROUP	# OF NEVADA STUDENTS	COMPLETE SCORE AVG %
Afro-American	185	15.2
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	66	15.7
Caucasian	3124	19.4
Mexican American/ Chicano	113	17.4
Asian American	206	19.7
Puerto Rican/Cuban/ Hispanis	68	17.5

NUMBERS OF NEVADA EXAMINEES

Figures 4 and 5 illustrates the changing numbers of examinees in Nevada. These charts illustrate that both tests have been taken in greater numbers than last year. Of the total of 6,495 exams that were administered during the 87-88 school year, approximately 62% were ACT and 38% were SAT. See Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4

COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMS

Number of Nevada Test Takers

1982-1988

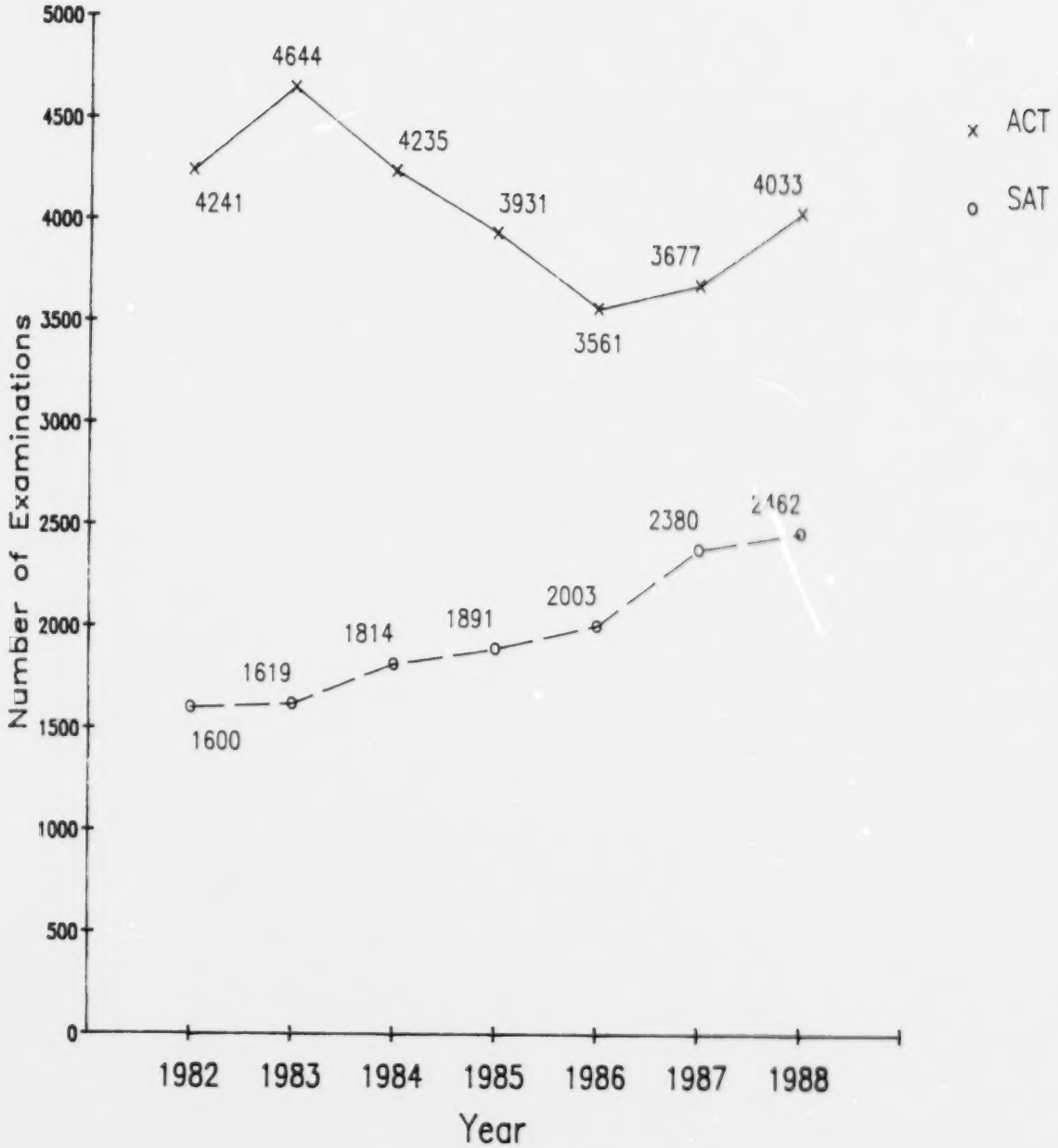


Figure 5

Total Number of College Entrance Examinations Administered in Nevada

(ACT and SAT Combined)